

SYSTEM FOR PROTECTING INFORMATION OVER THE INTERNET

Abstract

A system for protecting information over the Internet, or other public network, is provided at a web site addressable by one or more client computer systems. Each client computer system connects to the web site to receive a respondent identifier and viewer software. When the viewer software is installed at the client computer system, it generates a unique viewer identifier identifying the client computer system. The viewer identifier is sent to the web site for registering the viewer identifier with the respondent identifier. The web site has a database and one or more web servers coupled to the database. The database stores registration information including the viewer identifier and associated respondent identifiers for the client computer systems, encrypted content information files and keys to decrypt such files, survey invitation information for each of the surveys, and exposure limit information. The client computer system receives an E-mail invitation to participate in a survey. In response to receiving a survey in accordance with the E-mail invitation, the client computer system enables the content viewer to connect to the web site of the content protection system and download a file with the encrypted content information for that survey. The viewer software then sends a request to the content protection system for a key to decrypt the downloaded content information file. The content protection system determines based on the respondent, viewer and survey identifiers and associated exposure limit information whether to send a decryption key. If so, a decryption key is sent to the client computer system and the viewer uses the key to decrypt the encrypted content information file, and then opens a viewer window to show the decrypted content information on the display of the computer system. During viewing, the viewer ignores interrupts from the user interface of the computer which typically allow the user to access information and thereby enable copying. If the user selects another window other than the window of the viewer, the viewer stops showing the decrypted content and displays a protection image in its place.